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Major storm ahead; drivers urged to change plans

MEDFORD — A major winter storm begins today for northern California and the mountains of southern Oregon, according to the National Weather Service (NWS), and will affect travel on Interstate 5 through Saturday. The NWS Winter Weather Advisory reads:

This will be a major storm and disruptions for travelers will occur. The higher elevation portions of I-5 and state highways through the Cascades will receive a lot of snow and may be closed at times. Near blizzard conditions on Friday through early Saturday will make any traveling dangerous. Travelers are urged to modify travel plans to avoid the storm. If travel is unavoidable, bring plenty of extra food, water, blankets, cold weather clothing and emergency gear. Inform someone of your travel plans and expected departure and arrival times.

Oregon Department of Transportation District Manager John Vial said his agency alerted the Southern Oregon chapter of the American Red Cross to the pending storm.

"This could be the biggest storm we've faced in years," Vial said. "If you're planning to go down to California, you need to be ready for the possibility that you won't get there."

Road condition updates are available at www.Tripcheck.com or by calling 511. Road and weather information can be accessed toll-free within Oregon by dialing (800) 977-ODOT (6368). California road conditions are online at the Caltrans Web site, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/roadinfo or by calling 511 within California or (800) 427-7623 outside the state.

Winter driving tips online

ODOT offers winter driving tips online at http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/. Check out the Winter Travel News Packet, a collection of stories, tips and figures about driving during winter weather conditions, at http://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/COMM/docs/2007-2008_winterstory.pdf.

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